



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**AFGHANISTAN**

# Democracy and Governance

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PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*USAID supports Afghan civil society efforts to engage government in more citizen-focused planning processes.*

## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE SNAPSHOT

- Facilitated the successful Emergency and Constitutional Loya Jirgas in 2003 and 2004.
- Supported the successful 2004 presidential elections and 2005 parliamentary elections.
- Constructed 31 justice facilities to date.
- Located, retyped, and re-published the country's entire body of law dating back to 1963.
- Trained thousands of judges, members of parliament, legislative drafters, and provincial counselors.

## BACKGROUND

In a region where democratic traditions and institutions are still nascent, Afghanistan has made significant strides since the fall of the Taliban. In four years, the country has drafted a new constitution; democratically elected a president, parliament, and provincial councils; and disarmed more than 60,000 former combatants. At the London Conference in February 2006, the Government of Afghanistan committed to expand its capacity to provide basic services throughout the country; recruit competent and credible professionals to public service on the basis of merit; establish a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels; implement measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice and the rule of law; and promoting respect for human rights.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's Democracy and Governance program supports the establishment of a broadly accepted national government to promote national unity and effectively serve the needs of the Afghan people. USAID accomplishes this by helping create permanent electoral institutions, promoting good governance reforms, rebuilding the justice system and strengthening human rights. Programs also support the functioning of the National Assembly to represent citizens and their interests, building the capacity of sub national governments, and fostering a more informed, active, and effective civil society.

## INCREASING THE COMPETENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE FORMAL LEGAL SYSTEM

USAID's rule of law program has three main components—building sustainable capacity for the formal court system, educating citizens about how the courts operate and their legal and human rights, and helping the Ministry of Justice collect, index and disseminate Afghan law. The program supports the Supreme Court in its role of managing the courts, by providing professional training to judges and strengthening the institutional capacity of the courts in caseload statistics, budgeting, and management. All of Afghanistan's laws have been indexed and scanned, and a complete electronic set, searchable by title, has been given to Parliament. A hard copy set of a dozen basic laws has been distributed to all courthouses countrywide. This program also supports legal education at the four major universities and has built 31 justice facilities in 15 of 34 provinces.

## STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PROCESSES

Creating permanent electoral institutions will enable the Government of Afghanistan to carry out valid, acceptable elections with its own resources and expertise. It also helps political groups and candidates un-



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## Governance Democracy and (continued)



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*Chesht District Administrative Building in Herat is the 30th justice sector facility built by USAID over the past three years.*



USAID/Afghanistan

*Town hall meeting in Kapisa sponsored by USAID partner the International Republican Institute.*



USAID/Afghanistan

*USAID, in partnership with Internews, has sponsored the establishment of thirty three community radio stations and hundreds of journalists.*

derstand how to campaign, form coalitions and operate in a competitive political system. USAID offered training and support to the candidates, the election commission, and media in the successful 2005 parliamentary and provincial elections. In the 2004 presidential elections, assistance included voter registration, voter education, logistics and security arrangements at polling stations. USAID also helped facilitate the successful Emergency and Constitutional Loya Jirgas in 2003 and 2004, by providing logistical support and assistance to the Constitutional Commission. Ongoing projects involve specialized seminars for the new members of the National Assembly and Provincial Councils.

### INCREASING PRESENCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

USAID promotes a strong and active civil society, with an emphasis on women-focused organizations, by providing technical training and grants to civil society organizations (CSOs). Nationwide roundtable discussions helped Afghans articulate their concerns and work toward achieving organizational goals. This program assists the government and CSOs to draft new legislation to create an enabling environment for community volunteerism. In collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, USAID helped improve a version of the newly decreed CSO Law which defines eligibility requirements to become classified as a non-profit organization and receive tax exempt status. The program has selected eight regional Afghan organizations to help implement grass-roots training and institution-building activities. USAID also provides support to free media through journalism training and support for the establishment and development of 33 community radio stations. These stations which are governed by community boards, currently reach over 50% Afghanistan's population.

### STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

USAID, together with DFID and UNDP, is providing assistance to the core offices of the Afghan Presidency, focused on streamlining and modernization of office functions to facilitate more effective policy support to the Presidency. USAID actively works with the Members and professional staff of the newly-elected Afghan National Assembly, the country's first ever, multi-party legislature. Assistance focuses on the establishment of effective committee structures, specialized seminars for members and staff, and the required information and research infrastructure. In addition, USAID is assisting the Government of Afghanistan at both national and provincial levels as it defines the structures of provincial government. USAID provided facilitators to work with newly-elected Provincial Councilors in 33 of 34 Provinces, and provided basic skills training in budgeting, strategic planning and constituency outreach.